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Official Records

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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Emomali Rahmonov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Mr. Emomali Rahmonov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emomali Rahmonov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rahmonov (*interpretation from Russian*): I wish at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. Udovenko, on your election to the important post of President of the General Assembly, and to wish you success in guiding the work of a forum that is so important for the entire international community.

Speaking from this rostrum three years ago, I stressed that, in spite of the armed confrontation that was then on the increase in my country, the leadership of Tajikistan had opted for a consistent policy of political dialogue as the only means of achieving peace and national reconciliation.

Today the results of that policy can be seen. With active international support, the negotiation process led to historic decisions being taken by the Tajik people, laying the groundwork for successful progress towards peace and national reconciliation.

I should like to take this opportunity to express sincere gratitude to the members of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his Special Representative in Tajikistan, Mr. Gerd Merrem, for the constant and close attention that they have paid to achieving a settlement in Tajikistan, and, indeed, to the problems of Tajikistan in general. We greatly appreciate the efforts of the Russian Federation, the Islamic Republic of Iran and other States, as well as international and regional organizations, that acted as observers at the inter-Tajik talks and made a significant contribution to the very difficult negotiation process. We are deeply grateful to all friendly countries, to international organizations and primarily to members of the United Nations system that have assisted and continue to provide assistance in the establishment of a lasting peace and accord in Tajikistan.

We are fully determined to strive consistently and unwaveringly for the full implementation of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan and for the achievement of national accord. Here we count on growing support from the United Nations and its observer missions, acting in close cooperation with the Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Without

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such cooperation, it would be extremely difficult to implement the military component of the inter-Tajik agreements or to achieve a final solution to the problem of refugees.

Another important aspect of United Nations assistance to the peace process in Tajikistan is the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategy on humanitarian aid and post-conflict reconstruction of our economy. An excellent framework for this effort is provided by General Assembly resolution 51/30 J adopted on 25 April 1997 on emergency international humanitarian assistance for lasting peace and reconciliation in Tajikistan. We hope that in the course of this session this useful initiative will be continued and that an updated resolution will be adopted taking fully into account the specifics of the transition period and the humanitarian needs of the people of Tajikistan.

Among the multitude of conflicts and crisis situations which unfortunately entered a new phase during the period following the cold war, we are particularly concerned about the situation in the neighbouring Islamic State of Afghanistan. Together with our Central Asian partners in the CIS and with Russia, we have repeatedly expressed our profound concern over the destabilizing impact of the situation in Afghanistan on the entire region, as well as on the situation beyond the region.

On the initiative of the Almaty Five, about a year ago the Security Council became more actively involved in Afghan problems. Along with resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, Security Council decisions are the best foundation for ending the fratricidal war that has been going on for so many years there.

I have to say frankly that the fact that the Afghan problem remains unsettled may undermine the fragile peace in Tajikistan. We hope that, taking into account the agreed position of the "Big Eight" Summit participants in Denver, and using their experience of cooperation to solve conflicts in the Balkans and other hot spots in the world, Russia and the United States, cooperating with other States concerned and supporting United Nations involvement, will play a decisive part in an Afghan settlement in the nearest possible future.

I will be honest with the Assembly: it is in Tajikistan's vital interests that peace be established in Afghanistan for another reason — it would help to reduce substantially the flow of arms and drugs across the Tajik-Afghan border, and it would reduce the proliferation of terrorism and waves of extremism which are destabilizing the entire region.

I would like to comment now on the issue of reform of our Organization. We attribute great importance to the United Nations as a key instrument for maintaining international peace and security. The idea of adjusting the United Nations to today's realities is certainly important and necessary. In today's transitional conditions, the stabilizing role of the United Nations must grow steadily.

We believe it is important to approach United Nations reform in a pragmatic way, concentrating on the most pressing issues, and maintaining a reasonable balance between innovation and strengthening mechanisms that have proved their effectiveness.

As a State that has experienced first-hand all the hardships of civil war and has travelled the difficult road towards national reconciliation with active support and assistance from the United Nations, Tajikistan is convinced of the need to preserve strong and efficient peacemaking mechanisms. First and foremost, this relates to the work of the Security Council, which has to maintain timeliness and effectiveness. We believe that Security Council representation would be enhanced if its membership were expanded not only to candidates from industrialized States, such as Germany and Japan, but also to representatives from developing countries on a rotational basis.

On administrative and budget issues, we consider it important to ensure zero actual and, if possible, zero nominal growth of the United Nations budget. We must utilize material and human resources more efficiently, and we must strengthen mechanisms monitoring the work of the United Nations apparatus. We must also count on the understanding of the international community in respect of temporary financial difficulties facing some developing States and countries emerging from conflicts.

We consider it right that the strategy for the twenty-first century should be sustainable development, ensuring conservation of the environment and natural resources. Although we were not entirely satisfied with the results of the recent nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, held last summer, it is important that that session outlined ways of expediting progress in key areas of sustainable development, as defined in Agenda 21.

As a country that has suffered from civil war and is in transition to market relationships, Tajikistan expects

the United Nations to pay closer attention and participate more efficiently in ensuring sustainable development in countries with transitional economies, including introducing measures to neutralize the negative social consequences of such transitions. We believe that the United Nations can and must maintain its unique role in providing international support for the integration of States in transition into global economic and trade systems and for their involvement in the existing and emerging regulatory institutions and mechanisms. These demands were reflected in the Agenda for Development, which was adopted by the General Assembly in June this year.

The absence of peaceful conditions in Tajikistan has prevented it from moving towards sustainable development in any significant way, and consequently it has not been able fully to implement the recommendations of Agenda 21.

Due to the civil confrontations that have swept the country, the main efforts of the Government of Tajikistan in recent years have been aimed at eradicating conflict, establishing peace and tranquillity, and creating conditions to integrate the population into active economic and creative work.

The new prospects for peace provide us with an opportunity to redouble our efforts and concentrate on unsolved problems. The most important of these include the rapid reconstruction of the social and economic infrastructure that had been destroyed; the return of refugees to their homes, together with their social and psychological adjustment and reintegration into the new conditions of life; the active involvement of citizens in economic activity through the creation of jobs, which are crucial; and, above all, the creation of conditions conducive to the democratic development of Tajik society.

Today, an intensive transition to a socially oriented market economy is under way in Tajikistan. Against the background of an increasingly far-reaching peace process, the Government of Tajikistan is carrying out economic reforms that promise positive results in the foreseeable future. The country's natural wealth, water supply, energy and intellectual resources are favourable to such a development.

However, reality demands that we confront the situation with honesty. We must admit that without international support it would be extremely difficult for us to carry out the reconstruction and creative tasks quickly. In the first place, it is a question of donors continuing their commendable efforts to extend humanitarian assistance to our most vulnerable population groups, which have suffered from the civil war. Economic reforms under way in the country also need efficient and targeted support. This would involve an additional flow of investment into Tajikistan, the more active involvement of the country's export potential in international trade transactions, and our gradual integration into international financial and trade institutions. I should like to express my conviction that, at this stage of its development, Tajikistan will not be left alone to deal with its problems.

The goal set out in the Charter of the United Nations,

> "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war",

has very special meaning for the people of Tajikistan, who have experienced the bitter taste of fratricidal war. Our experience has shown that the work of the United Nations, based on the coordinated efforts of its Member States, can achieve tangible results and resolve seemingly irreconcilable differences, thereby enabling us to move onto a peaceful, non-violent track.

We note the tireless efforts of the United Nations in maintaining and strengthening international peace and security on a practical level under new and constantly changing conditions. We believe that useful momentum for this work could be provided by convening, in 1999, a third international peace conference, an initiative that is enjoying growing support among members of the international community. Greater in-depth discussion of this issue on the threshold of the twenty-first century would further promote mutual understanding and cooperation in the world, taking account of the interests of all on the basis of the equality of all nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Tajikistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emomali Rahmonov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam, His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah.

Prince Mohamed Bolkiah (Brunei Darussalam): I extend my warmest congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election. I am sure you will guide us well, and we look forward to working with you.

I would also like to congratulate our Secretary-General on the excellent start he has made in answer to the Members' call for reform. At the same time, I would like to thank the outgoing President for his support in this most important work.

You take office at a critical time, Mr President. There are obviously no easy solutions to the many challenges faced by our Organization. But there is one thing I hope we can all do: be positive and constructive in our approach. With this in mind, I would like to comment briefly on two aspects of current United Nations work that particularly concern us in Brunei Darussalam. The first is peace and security and the second is the Secretary-General's reform package.

On peace and security, we were pleased to have had the chance to do something to help in the Middle East and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. But we have been dismayed by what has taken place this year, particularly in the Middle East. The current situation is not what we expected. The disruption of the peace process clearly started when Israel decided to build settlements in East Jerusalem. This was bad policy. It was obviously not aimed at helping the peace process. Thus, we would like to see the Israelis do something positive to repair the damage done.

We have made our position clear for many years. We do not wish to return to the past. It is time for more than words, arguments and resolutions. What we want to see is a peace process that actually proceeds. Somehow, the impasse must be broken, and we greatly appreciate the efforts being made by Jordan, Egypt and the United States to do that. We encourage them and all countries that can help to continue their efforts, despite the many difficulties.

Concerning the situation in Bosnia, we have also been disappointed by the way certain elements continue to undermine the cause of peace. There are overwhelming signs from the peoples of Bosnia that they welcome the new opportunities they have for a normal life. We are therefore pleased to see the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations taking strong action to enforce the Dayton Agreement. In our view, such action is definitely being taken on behalf of the Bosnian people. We offer them our full support.

These are just two of the areas where we have seen setbacks to United Nations efforts. We can add many others in Europe, Asia and Africa. What is required everywhere is a determination to resolve all problems peacefully by means of dialogue and negotiation.

Given that spirit, progress is possible. We have seen evidence of it in the great efforts being made in northeast Asia to try to find a solution to the problems on the Korean Peninsula. The difficult situation in Korea could affect all of us in the Asia-Pacific region, so we very much welcome the four-party talks as a way of reducing tension and building confidence. For the same reason, we are happy to support the initiative of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), since it will help remove one serious threat to peace.

On the question of lasting peace, however, we have learned to take nothing for granted.

Some causes of instability have been dramatically highlighted in our own region this year. The recent attacks on our currencies and our financial institutions have shocked us all. They cannot be dismissed as mere ups and downs in the market. It is all very well for commentators to say so, but this is not good enough; it is too simplistic. The effect is like a disease, and it goes for the heart of our economic systems. It seeks out weak points, and developing countries have limited built-in resistance.

Yes, we will survive. Our foundations are sound. But the experience has taught us a lesson. We are realizing how deeply we are all affected by globalization, market forces and interdependence. The playing field is anything but level, and this means that the world organizations to which we belong must be highly effective.

The most important of these is the United Nations, and this brings me to the questions I know the Secretary-General is keen to hear all of us answer at this session: What do we think of his package of proposed reforms? Are they going to help developing nations?

My broad reply would be to say that we think the package is better than the previous attempts to achieve reform. Overall, it firmly addresses the right questions,

and, having long supported the idea of United Nations reform, we welcome the proposals.

However, we do have a few comments to offer. We believe they are constructive and hope they will be taken into account by the Secretary-General. As many others have remarked, the proposal seems, basically, to be a management package. It reflects the Secretary-General's long experience in the Organization. But good management principles represent only one aspect of the reforms we need. We hope that an acceptable consensus will be reached on matters which especially concern developing nations.

We would like the Secretary-General to make absolutely sure that nothing is going to weaken the things the United Nations does so well for ordinary people. The United Nations work in the field gives the Organization meaning for millions. We must not let our agencies down.

With regard to the proposals concerning peace and security, we hope that the Working Group will soon complete its work on the Security Council. This aspect of reform will certainly strengthen the Organization as a whole.

With regard to development cooperation, we welcome efforts to enhance it. It represents all that is best in international cooperation. It is also directly linked to the important Chapter IX of our Charter, which calls for higher standards of living, full employment and economic and social progress. Without these, there can be no lasting peace and security in the developing world.

Lastly, there is the question of financial viability, perhaps the most important of all if reforms are to be effective. We find the various proposals interesting, but what we are concerned about is whether they provide a long-term solution. We therefore want to give these matters more thought. Naturally, we rely on the Committee to look very carefully indeed into the details of any such scheme.

Having made these points, I should like to conclude by once again offering my congratulations to the Secretary-General on his work. As I said, it is a good start. When the work is finished, we hope that the result will be not only administrative reform but a strong renewal of the deepest principles of our Charter.

We wish the Secretary-General, and you yourself, Mr. President, much success in the year ahead. We assure you that we will do all we can to assist fellow Members in responding well to what the Secretary-General has rightly described as unprecedented demands and opportunities.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, His Excellency The Honourable Ralph Maraj.

Mr. Maraj (Trinidad and Tobago): On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I have the distinct pleasure and honour to extend sincere congratulations to you, Sir, and to the Government of Ukraine on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this fifty-second session. I am confident that, under your able leadership, the urgent and important issues which face the General Assembly at this critical time in the history of the United Nations will be advanced.

I would also like to express my profound appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for his excellent stewardship over the last session. His inimitable and dynamic style has left a distinctive mark on the *modus operandi* of the General Assembly. Ambassador Ismail deserves our commendation for his efforts to advance the work of the General Assembly on issues such as the reform of the Security Council, the Agenda for Development and the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly to review and appraise the implementation of Agenda 21.

Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Today, as we approach the twenty-first century and a new range of issues demands our attention as nation States, our commitment to the United Nations is no less focused, no less poignant. Trinidad and Tobago continues to believe in the efficacy of the United Nations, a body now at a critical point in its evolution. We applaud Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who has presented perhaps the most extensive reform proposals in the history of the Organization. A restructured Organization will be better poised to respond more readily to the challenges of the next century. There is no doubt about the need of the international community for the United Nations. No other body remotely approximates its universality of membership and it remains the most appropriate forum for addressing the interrelated issues of peace, security and sustainable development.

While the international community must address these perennial issues, we need at the same time to confront the daunting tasks of providing humanitarian

assistance and reconstructive aid and ensuring the promotion of good governance, democracy and human rights. In this post-cold-war period, the United Nations must strive to build an international community based on peace, justice, equity, democracy and the rule of international law.

Trinidad and Tobago is concerned about the rise in political conflicts and tensions and the unresolved long-standing disputes which continue to threaten international peace and security. Increased efforts must be made by the international community to address these conflicts through peaceful means. Trinidad and Tobago wishes to restate its commitment to the non-use of force in the conduct of international relations and the peaceful settlement of disputes. We will continue to support United Nations-led peacekeeping missions and do our part to further democracy, as exemplified by our participation in the election processes in such countries as Haiti, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Namibia and South Africa.

This General Assembly will address yet again the continuing quest for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. At this delicate period in the peace process, Trinidad and Tobago believes that durable peace will be achieved only if all parties to the dispute adhere to the relevant United Nations resolutions and implement the agreements and guarantees to which they have committed themselves in bilateral and multilateral negotiations.

We in the Caribbean region appreciate the support given by the international community to the Government and people of Haiti. This support has contributed to the progress made so far in the building of democracy and the strengthening of its institutions. We are convinced that the recent decision to extend the mandate of the United Nations Transition Mission in Haiti was necessary to consolidate gains already made. We must continue to provide material and other support to strengthen Haiti's democracy and its economic development. These are necessary pillars for the establishment of durable peace and stability in that country.

Trinidad and Tobago, as a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), pledges to continue to do its part in consolidating this process. It is in this context that we welcomed Haiti as the fifteenth member State of CARICOM at the meeting last July of the Heads of Government of CARICOM, which was held in Montego Bay in Jamaica. Trinidad and Tobago continues to participate in the efforts of the international community in this transition period, as evidenced by the fact that a Trinidad and Tobago national, Ambassador Colin Granderson, is the Executive Director of the Organization of American States/United Nations International Civilian Mission in Haiti. It will also be recalled that Trinidad and Tobago, as part of a hemispheric effort, participated in the military mission that restored the democratically elected President to Haiti and our efforts have continued at both the civilian and military levels after that objective was achieved.

In the post-cold-war era, the world has witnessed an escalation in the abuse of human rights, including some cases of genocide and other heinous crimes against humanity. Trinidad and Tobago has always been concerned about such atrocities. Trinidad and Tobago is proud of the role it played in reintroducing on the international political and legal agenda the question of the establishment of a permanent international criminal court.

The Government of my country is heartened by the increasing support for the establishment of the international criminal court and we welcome the substantial progress made thus far by the Preparatory Committee for its establishment. Trinidad and Tobago urges Member States to continue their constructive and active participation during the forthcoming sessions of the Preparatory Committee. We further urge wider involvement in the process so as to ensure the successful negotiation of a widely acceptable statute, which will be finalized at a conference of plenipotentiaries to be held in Rome in the summer of 1998.

It is because of this concern for the promotion and protection of human rights and our absolute condemnation of acts of genocide and crimes against humanity that Trinidad and Tobago participated at the highest level through our President, Mr. Arthur N. R. Robinson, at a conference in Italy on reining in impunity for international crimes and serious violations of fundamental human rights. That conference addressed issues pertaining to the ongoing work of the Preparatory Committee and unanimous support was expressed for a permanent international criminal court to ensure that perpetrators of such crimes are brought to justice.

Linked to the considerations of peace and security are the myriad socio-economic problems which continue to undermine the stability of our nations. In this regard, the international community has sought to respond by convening a series of world conferences to analyse the global situation and provide blueprints for action at the national, regional and international levels.

A continuing concern for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains the failure on the part of the international community to provide adequate resources for the accelerated implementation of the commitments made at these conferences. Any reform of the United Nations system aimed at delivering mandated programmes in a more efficient manner must therefore take this factor into account.

The World Summit for Social Development, which was held in Copenhagen in 1995, highlighted the urgent need to eradicate poverty and to develop policies to promote social and economic equity. In October 1996, as a follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, a Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Eradication was held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The assembled Ministers developed a Plan of Action on poverty eradication, which is guiding Governments of the region in the elaboration of their own national plans. In this regard, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has adopted and is vigilantly pursuing as one of its primary objectives a policy of sustained economic growth with equity, with special emphasis on poverty eradication.

My Government recognizes the central role of education and its impact on the eradication of poverty and we have begun to reform the curriculum to give all children equal access to quality education as we strive continuously in Trinidad and Tobago towards achieving a "total quality nation". Education, in itself, is central to the Government's objective of producing a total quality nation, in which all our citizenry strives for excellence, is committed to the highest standards, is technologically equipped to deal with the realities of a knowledge-based work environment and is afforded opportunities for life-long learning.

In addition, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has established mechanisms for addressing the scourge of poverty and societal inequities through the following initiatives.

First, we established a change-management unit for poverty eradication and equity-building, which reports to a Ministerial Council on Social Development. This Council was launched in October 1996, with the assistance of the Poverty Strategies Initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Government applauds UNDP's support.

Secondly, we set up a Committee on Social Displacement. The Committee's terms of reference include the development of holistic plans to provide relief to all homeless and destitute persons.

Thirdly, expenditure on several other social safety-net schemes has been significantly increased in order to deal with problems and issues affecting women, the elderly, children, adolescents, the disabled and the dispossessed.

These measures have been recognized and indeed reflected by UNDP in its 1997 *Human Development Report*, which lists Trinidad and Tobago at the top of the human poverty index rankings. According to the Report, Trinidad and Tobago is among those countries which have reduced human poverty to a human poverty index value of less than 10 per cent.

We must all continue to support efforts for the eradication of poverty in accordance with agreed programmes and plans of action. The assault on poverty, especially rural poverty, must take into account the special needs of women and their full integration in the development process.

Trinidad and Tobago therefore welcomes the progress achieved by the United Nations in following up the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, which had as one of its primary objectives the need to accord high priority to gender issues. It welcomes as well the appointment of a high-level official as a special adviser to the Secretary-General on gender issues and the advancement of women.

Social and economic problems transcend national boundaries and therefore require international solutions based on strengthened global partnerships to support action. When the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, The Honourable Basdeo Panday, addressed the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly, he identified a number of social problems which pose a particular threat to the stability and integrity of small States. Among the problems he mentioned were drug abuse and drug trafficking and the associated problems of money laundering and trafficking in small arms, as well as terrorism and social disintegration.

Trinidad and Tobago therefore welcomes the convening of the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on illicit drugs, to be held in New York in June 1998. This session should provide an appropriate opportunity for Governments to review progress made in implementing the Global Programme of

Action on drugs adopted in February 1990 and serve to intensify drug-control strategies and cooperation worldwide.

The drug scourge and its attendant consequences require action at different levels. To that end, Caribbean Governments have decided to establish a criminal justice protection programme that would facilitate cooperation in the confidential protection of witnesses, jurors, judicial and law enforcement personnel and their families. If this programme is to be successfully implemented, additional training and technical assistance from the international community and agencies such as the United Nations International Drug Control Programme will be required.

The United Nations has a critical role to play, but it is the responsibility — indeed, the duty — of every State to act aggressively in this regard. Conscious of its responsibility, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has embarked upon initiatives to curb the illicit drug trade and eradicate the associated downstream activity of money laundering.

These initiatives are in keeping with international conventions and declarations, such as the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, the Commonwealth Scheme relating to Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and the Inter-American Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters. Trinidad and Tobago has also entered into bilateral agreements with other countries to foster cooperation with regard to arresting the growth of transnational crimes associated with trafficking.

Our Government has declared its commitment to eliminating the threats to the stability, security and safety of our society that emanate from the scourge of the illicit drug trade. Some of the measures taken include the following.

The first measure is the signing of an agreement on maritime counter-drug operations with the United States of America. This bilateral mechanism has already proved to be very effective in dealing with the pernicious drug trade.

The second measure is the extension of the Government's powers of extradition and the negotiation of agreements with countries with which it does not now have extradition agreements. We are renegotiating existing agreements to make extradition procedures more effective. Trinidad and Tobago is also fulfilling its obligations under existing extradition treaties.

The third measure is the serious implementation of money- laundering drug laws. The illicit gains of the drug trade and the resource base of drug criminals are being attacked. The property and profits of drug lords are being confiscated as a result of measures which have been introduced in my country.

Also, a task force to counter narcotics and money laundering has been established and the Government is pursuing law reform in the area of bank secrecy.

Another measure is that Trinidad and Tobago — with the cooperation of other CARICOM Governments, Canada, Britain and the United States of America — has created a witness protection programme. In addition, we are establishing the criminal justice protection programme to which I alluded earlier.

Finally, we continue to seek bilateral and multilateral assistance in various forms, such as equipment, personnel, aircraft and maritime support in our relentless fight against illicit drugs.

Earlier I referred to the efforts to reform this Organization. One of the key issues that will engage the attention of delegations at the fifty-second session is the question of the reform of the intergovernmental machinery. We are particularly interested in efforts at reform and reconstruction, especially as they relate to the development activities of the United Nations. We view with satisfaction the Secretary-General's proposal, introduced last March, that the new structure of the Secretariat should serve to bolster support for Africa's development, South-South cooperation and the sustainable development of small island States.

Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the recent decision of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly to hold a comprehensive review of the United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. That Conference, which was held in Barbados in 1994, was of historic significance, marking as it did the recognition on the part of the international community of the special situation and needs of small islands.

The Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action have as their overall objective the management of environmental problems, the management of our vital natural resources and the improvement of human-resource capability and institutional requirements for sustainable development of small island States in the overall context

of Agenda 21. We look forward to the full support of the United Nations and the international community when the comprehensive review and appraisal of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action takes place in 1999.

A new phase of international cooperation for the Caribbean region was heralded in May 1997 at the first meeting of the secretariats of CARICOM and the United Nations, from which emanated a work programme for the implementation of special projects. We commend this initiative and are confident that this new relationship will be of benefit to the people of the Caribbean region.

The volcanic eruptions in Montserrat bring to the fore the vulnerability of small islands to natural disasters. This phenomenon and other environmental problems have received increased recognition since the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development. Trinidad and Tobago shares the anguish felt by the citizens of the Caribbean island of Montserrat, which is fast becoming uninhabitable. CARICOM member States have responded within their limited capabilities to the disaster, and we will continue to provide logistic and other support.

To this end, Trinidad and Tobago, in response to the plight of the Government and people of Montserrat, has pledged financial and technical assistance, medical and other relief and engineering personnel, and has been involved in the establishment of a CARICOM village in the northern part of the island of Montserrat — a decision that was taken at the recent conference of CARICOM Heads of Government. Within our available resources, Trinidad and Tobago will continue to be of assistance.

The special concerns of small island developing States were also incorporated in the recently adopted Agenda for Development. The Agenda recognizes the fact that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development, and are the basis for the achievement of a higher quality of life for all people. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago attaches great significance to this issue. We are therefore pursuing economic, social and infrastructural development in a sustainable way which avoids environmental degradation, conserves our natural resource endowment and helps to build and maintain a long-term national capacity to support rising standards of living for the population, as well as opportunities for self-actualization.

Recent steps to promote sustainable development in Trinidad and Tobago in the area of environmental management include: the establishment of an environmental management authority and drafting of a national environmental policy; the development of environmental standards; the preparation of a water resources management strategy; the development of a national parks and watershed management project; and the commissioning of a study to assist in establishing a policy framework and facilities for the management of oil and hazardous wastes.

Trinidad and Tobago has also ratified several international conventions relating to the environment: the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer; the 1994 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the 1994 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal; and the 1996 Convention on Biological Diversity.

In the area of macroeconomic policy, we have proceeded to liberalize the trade and exchange regimes to foster enhanced competitiveness; streamline the incentive framework; privatize State-owned enterprises to promote increasing levels of private investment; promote entrepreneurial activity through, among other measures, a venture capital regime; and to modernize and strengthen intellectual property legislation to encourage investment and the transfer of technology.

In the social sector, the Government has focused on rationalization and restructuring of the social service delivery system; expanding access to education for the school-age population; rationalization and strengthening of the health services through the health sector reform programme; regularization of squatter communities; restructuring of the unemployment relief programme to allow for skill acquisition through on-the-job training; the establishment of a community development fund to provide financing for the delivery of basic social services and infrastructure to the poor and vulnerable population groups and communities; and the provision of institutional support for the strengthening of non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations to assist in this regard.

Trinidad and Tobago is a cosmopolitan society in which the human rights of each individual are constitutionally guaranteed. We endeavour to achieve the cherished ideal of a truly democratic nation, in which all persons live together in harmony, with equal opportunities for all, in order that each individual may contribute to the process of national development. In this

context, one of the primary goals of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has been to seek to wider participation in the decision-making process through a strengthened local government machinery in a manner that will promote the empowerment of local communities in the pursuit of development efforts and the promotion of good governance.

In a similar vein, the United Nations, with the diversity of its membership, must harness individual and collective strengths to advance the interests of all Members of the Organization as we move into a new millennium. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the ongoing discussions aimed at reforming the membership and working procedures of the Security Council. It is our hope that this process will result in a Council whose composition more accurately reflects the wider membership of the General Assembly and whose working procedures are more open and inclusive than has previously been the norm.

We all need to work steadfastly to improve the image of the United Nations from one of goal-setting to one which facilitates prompt action by Members in a manner that is consistent and wide-ranging and takes into account the special needs of the most vulnerable among us.

It is incumbent on all Member States to imbue our Organization with a renewed sense of self-confidence, faith and optimism and to work in a global partnership to achieve the goals and ideals of the United Nations. We owe this legacy to present and future generations.

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Rajkeswur Purryag, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Mauritius.

Mr. Purryag (Mauritius): Mr. President, I have the distinct honour and privilege on behalf of my delegation to extend to you, Sir, our warmest congratulations upon your election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. Your election to this office is a fitting tribute to your personal qualities and recognition of the important role of your great nation in world affairs. We are confident that your wide experience and wisdom will ensure the success of our deliberations. You may rest assured of the fullest support and cooperation of my delegation.

I would also like to thank Ambassador Razali Ismail for his remarkable contribution to the last session. We thank him for his strong leadership and his hands-on approach during the discussions of some of the most difficult and crucial issues concerning the future of our Organization.

The changes taking place throughout the world today present new challenges for the United Nations system and call for a new approach in finding appropriate solutions. It is my firm belief that the success of the United Nations cannot be contemplated without reform and renewal of the Organization. We agree that the United Nations stands at a crossroads today. Its continued role and relevance depend on its ability to adapt to the new world environment.

We now have before us a number of proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report designed to better equip the United Nations to address its tasks in the new era. I thank the Secretary-General for this in-depth and valuable exercise. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to a great son of Africa and to his sterling qualities of leadership. The report not only addresses the strengths and weaknesses of our Organization, but also contains specific proposals to enable it to face present and future challenges on a sound footing. We subscribe fully to his view that this reform exercise is a process which will have to be carried out over a continuous period of time, given all its complexity and scope. I wish to assure you, Mr. President, that my delegation will extend its fullest cooperation and will actively participate in the deliberations on the report.

We also endorse the Secretary-General's proposals for promoting greater synergy within the United Nations system. We agree that they will advance complementarity and coherence. The effectiveness of the Organization will certainly be enhanced if it operates as an orchestrated unit at Headquarters and at country level, rather than as a group of semi-autonomous players.

Likewise, we welcome the Secretary-General's idea of setting up a development account to be fed by savings from reductions in non-programme costs. We express the sincere hope that sufficient funds will be made available to produce a significant impact on development programme financing. We should ensure that this dividend for development does indeed benefit the developing world, unlike the much-trumpeted "peace dividend" of the post-cold-war era.

We uphold the proposals aimed at enhancing the strategic direction which the General Assembly should provide. However, such proposals should be subjected to

the most careful scrutiny, because of all their implications, particularly in respect to the smaller and more vulnerable Member States. The General Assembly, as the Secretary-General rightly points out, is the organ that

> "most fully embodies the universal and democratic character of the Organization." *(A/51/950, para. 40)*

While we support the long-standing need for focusing legislative debates and streamlining this Assembly's agenda, we must ensure that this body does not end up being dominated by the concerns of the strong and powerful members only. Countries — big or small, like mine — should have equal possibilities of articulating any issue they consider important. It is by the way in which this Organization addresses issues most relevant to its smallest members that the international community at large will judge its significance.

The debate on the reform of the Security Council seems to have registered some notable movement recently. However, the distance separating the main positions remains quite daunting. We hope that the wide spectrum of views expressed so far on this subject will eventually converge and that general agreement will be reached. Such agreement should ensure that the composition of the reformed Council is based on greater representation, transparency and equitable geographical distribution, with the inclusion of developing countries as permanent members. In this regard, we reaffirm our support for the position of the Non-Aligned Movement calling for the expansion of the Security Council on the basis of fair and adequate representation.

Africa has also stated its position on this matter at the recent Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit. The current representation of Africa in the Council does not reflect its status as the most sizeable group of the Organization's membership. Reform of this body must, therefore, restore Africa's position to the fullest extent possible.

In the same vein, my delegation would like to reiterate its support for India's claim to a permanent seat in the Security Council.

The globalization of the world economy is adding increasing pressures on the developing countries to embrace trade liberalization as a means to achieve economic growth. During the Uruguay Round negotiations developing countries made significant concessions in the hope of obtaining improved access to international markets. Many of them have still not seen the benefits of the new global trading system. Instead, they are haunted by the spectre of imminent erosion of preferences in their major export markets. Several African countries have made strenuous efforts to adhere faithfully to structural adjustment programmes and have adopted trade liberalization policies. Unfortunately, they have registered but an insignificant, if not declining, percentage of world trade. Africa's trade should become the top priority of the international community; otherwise, the multilateral trading system will run the risk of becoming fraught with tensions and discrimination.

It is unfortunate to note that foreign direct investment, which plays a central role in the ongoing integration of the world economy, is still highly concentrated in a few countries. The recent findings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) indicate that Africa received merely $5 billion out of $349 billion of foreign direct investment last year. Excluding South Africa, the share of Africa in the total investment for the developing countries figured at only 4 per cent. This is the lowest share since the early 1980s, and is a further indication that the African region is not benefiting from the global foreign direct investment boom. The 33 sub-Saharan countries that are classified among the least developed countries are in fact receiving less that 1 per cent of the total foreign direct investment for Africa. It is vital that these countries be provided with greater assistance and investment and be given special attention by the international community. Otherwise, they will be further marginalized, with the risk of disappearing from the world economic map.

We therefore wish this Assembly to give more attention to the development needs of the African continent. In this context, we welcome the recent special ministerial meeting of the Security Council, which has helped focus the attention of the international community on Africa. After several years of complacency and stagnation, there is now cause for some optimism.

We agree that it is incumbent upon us Africans to put our house in order. But unless we are freed from our debt burden, future generations may never have the opportunity to have access to clean drinking water, health care or proper schooling while scarce resources have to be utilized for debt payments.

For some countries, like Mozambique, which are just emerging from years of civil conflict, the Bretton

Woods initiative may have to be implemented in order to reduce debt faster. Indeed, not only do these countries have to reduce their crushing debt load, they also have to free resources to rehabilitate their economic infrastructure and fund social expenditure.

Last week the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Robin Cook, referred to the Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting held in Mauritius earlier this month, at which the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, made specific proposals with respect to debt. These proposals, known as the Mauritius Mandate, are meant to set some of the poorest nations on a path towards sustainable development by the year 2000. We welcome this laudable initiative by the British Government to write off debts totalling 132 million pounds of heavily indebted poor countries of the Commonwealth. We hope that this important measure will encourage major financial institutions and creditor nations to come forward and participate fully in transforming the destiny of debt-ridden poor countries.

We also welcome the various initiatives recently taken by the United States to promote investment and to develop a new trade regime for sub-Saharan Africa.

We equally appreciate the partnership between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, which has, through the successive Lomé Conventions, contributed immensely to the socio-economic development of the ACP countries. We are confident that the successor arrangement to the Fourth Lomé Convention will further consolidate this long-standing economic and trade partnership, and in this context we look forward to the continued support of the international community.

We welcome the communiqué of the Denver Summit, which represents a significant advance over the New Global Partnership for Development adopted at the Lyon Summit. The Declaration "Africa: Partnership for development" focuses attention exclusively on the African continent, with particular emphasis on the least-developed and landlocked countries. However, in the pledge to integrate the poorest countries into this world economy through trade liberalization and investment policies, no specific targets were defined on trade expansion or tariff reduction. If these countries are to be completely weaned from official development assistance, not only should their capacity to produce be strengthened, but they must also be given full access to foreign markets for their products, especially those coming from their nascent and developing industries.

We are fully conscious of the fact that North-South cooperation needs to be complemented by effective South-South cooperation. In this regard, the countries in our region have intensified their efforts to accomplish that goal.

For the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a new promising chapter was opened with the recent admission of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Seychelles. With the inclusion of these two new members, the regional grouping has become an even more important economic area in the African continent. It has the potential of becoming the driving force in promoting growth and development. There is a strong determination among the SADC members to achieve regional integration through industrial transformation and trade growth. My Government is fully committed to this goal, and I am pleased to inform this Assembly that Mauritius will have the honour and privilege of hosting the SADC summit meeting next year.

My Government is equally committed to the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), which regroups several countries of the Indian Ocean Rim in a tripartite network of Government, private sector and academia. The IOR-ARC was formally launched at a ministerial meeting in Mauritius in March this year with 14 founding members. It has generated tremendous interest among the countries of the region and internationally.

We remain confident that the international community will lend its support to these regional associations. We welcome the timely initiative announced last week by the United States Secretary of State to enhance dialogue with SADC and encourage investments and trade exchanges.

It is a matter of regret that the special session of the General Assembly held last June to review the progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21 was unable to agree on a frank assessment of the commitments entered into at Rio. Unfortunately, very little has been done on the ground. In some areas, particularly with regard to the level of official development assistance, the overall situation has actually worsened. It is disappointing that the lack of new and additional resources has not allowed the special concerns of the small island developing countries, as expressed in the Barbados Programme of Action, to be adequately addressed.

We also regret that on the question of climatic change, no consensus on limits relating to the emission of greenhouse gases could be reached. We hope that the Kyoto Conference on Climate Change will seriously address this issue and adopt meaningful measures to cut down the production of greenhouse gases.

This year the General Assembly twice had to convene an emergency session to consider the extremely serious situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. Unilateral actions have negated the Oslo peace process. This impasse must now be broken. The recent diplomatic effort by the United States Secretary of State, Mrs. Madeleine Albright, seems to have averted a total deadlock. It is essential that the protagonists start talking to each other again.

We view with serious concern the recent events in the Islamic Federal Republic of Comoros, which have resulted in the loss of human lives on the Island of Anjouan. We appeal to all the parties to the conflict to show restraint and to strive together towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis. We reaffirm our support to the United Nations stand on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Comoros. We also welcome the constructive role played by the OAU and the League of Arab States in mediating between the various parties. We look forward to an early convening of the proposed international conference in Addis Ababa for the restoration of peace in the Islamic Federal Republic of Comoros.

The situation in Burundi continues to preoccupy the international community. We support the Arusha peace initiative and reiterate our confidence in Mwalimu Nyerere's role as facilitator in the process aimed at finding a lasting solution to the Burundi crisis.

Later this year, we will kick off the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of one of the most important seminal documents adopted by this body — the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. During the year leading to this landmark event, Mauritius will work together with all Member States in promoting and strengthening the human rights situation everywhere, especially in the communities to which we are more closely associated through shared history and culture, namely the Commonwealth and the community of French-speaking countries.

The promotion of human rights has been an article of faith for my Government. It is also an integral part of our foreign policy. In this respect we welcome the setting up of the Indian Ocean Institute of Human Rights and Democracy in Mauritius for the promotion of human rights and democracy. We pledge our full support to this Institute. Human rights for all, including women and children, and democratic values are matters of universal concern.

As a multi-ethnic democracy, Mauritius has always raised its voice strongly against discrimination based on race, religion, culture and otherwise. In this regard, we note with satisfaction the recent developments in Fiji, which has finally decided to amend its Constitution in order to promote social harmony. We hope that the Government of Fiji will tackle the remaining issues standing in the way of the full enjoyment of fundamental rights and basic economic security by all segments of the population of Fiji.

Mr. Zacharakis (Greece), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mauritius reaffirms its full commitment to total disarmament and urges the world community to make every effort to rid itself of all weapons of mass destruction. It is in this spirit that Mauritius was among the first countries to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention and the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. We also reaffirm our support for the Ottawa initiative for a universal ban on anti-personnel landmines. It is regrettable that some major countries have decided to stay out of this process. We make a strong appeal to all Governments to become part of this unique and historic endeavour to eliminate landmines.

(spoke in French)

Allow me to take this opportunity to reaffirm the fact that my country, Mauritius, a former French island, belongs to the great community of French-speaking countries. This sense of belonging culminated with the holding in 1993 of the sixth summit of the French-speaking countries, whose central theme was "Unity in diversity", and which celebrated not only the universal values of the French-speaking countries but also made it possible for us to enshrine those same values in our society. Our people, who come from Africa, Asia and Europe, have deep roots in all the great cultures that form the French-speaking community. My compatriots can, in the course of one day, travel through all these cultures, one after another.

It is for that reason that my country attaches such great importance to the Francophone plan of promoting diversity in a world that is increasingly unipolar and

uniform. The upcoming summit in Hanoi will mark a very important stage in the future of this French-speaking community, providing it with the effective political means to make its voice heard on major international issues.

(spoke in English)

This Assembly is by now well aware of the just and legitimate claim of Mauritius to the restoration of its territorial integrity through the return of the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, to its national heritage. This Assembly should also note that this issue also has a tragic human dimension. Before Mauritius acceded to its independence, all of the inhabitants of the Chagos were forced to leave the land of their birth, where they had lived for several generations. The plight of those inhabitants must now be comprehensively addressed.

Likewise, we are still awaiting the return of the island of Tromelin to Mauritius. As we pursue our efforts to recover these territories, we call upon the former colonial Powers to expedite this process through dialogue in the spirit of the friendship that characterizes our relationships. My Government looks forward to an early resolution of these disputes.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lesotho, His Excellency Mr. Kelebone Maope.

Mr. Maope (Lesotho): Allow me to extend to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko the sincere congratulations of my delegation on his election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. It is with great pleasure that I assure him of Lesotho's support and cooperation as he conducts the deliberations of this body. Let me also take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, for the skilful manner in which he guided the work of the fifty-first session. My delegation truly appreciates his leadership and tireless dedication to the heavy responsibilities entrusted to him during the past year.

On the eve of a new millennium, the United Nations is poised on the threshold of an era of momentous changes. During the first 52 years of its existence, the Organization witnessed several changes in the configuration of international relations. Some of them were traumatic, others benign. The survival of the United Nations through all these tribulations bears testimony not only to its resilience, but also to the enduring validity of its mission.

But the continued success and relevance of the United Nations in the new millennium will depend in large measure on its capacity for self-renewal and on its readiness to meet its challenges in the environment of changed global circumstances.

The Secretary-General has demonstrated his willingness and resolve to bring about the much-needed change. We applaud, at the outset, his bold and far reaching proposals on the reform of the United Nations. Many of his proposals, indeed, meet with the approval of my Government, and it is our hope that the General Assembly will see its way clear to receiving them in the same manner. Some, however, do need careful scrutiny to ensure that the ideal of cost-cutting can still be achieved without compromising the overriding objective of realizing higher efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization in the execution of its mandate.

We urge that the totality of these proposals should be subjected to serious scrutiny at the appropriately high intergovernmental level, with a view to implementing those that enjoy wide support as expeditiously as possible. Our hope is that this can be done in a spirit of frankness and mutual understanding without the acrimony that so often characterizes our intergovernmental deliberations.

During the last two sessions of the General Assembly, we have debated and arrived at a clear understanding of the United Nations reforms that will best serve the interests of the world community in the next millennium. The reform initiatives of the Secretary-General, which cover diverse aspects of the functioning of the Organization, are therefore a timely and welcome response to our collective call for a reoriented and revitalized United Nations.

Lesotho, like other States of southern Africa, has gone through difficult political problems, which have largely been resolved. The outstanding problem is economic underdevelopment. We thus attach great importance to the United Nations role in development cooperation. We recognize the need to strengthen the capacity of the Secretary-General in this area by providing him with a deputy whose principal role, in our view, should be to coordinate the Organization's efforts and to give direction to all entities of the United Nations involved in development cooperation.

We fully support the initiative aimed at facilitating the unified and cooperative functioning of all the United

Nations funds and programmes involved in development operations at the field level, while at the same time reinforcing and maintaining the distinct nature of these entities. The specialized funds and programmes within the United Nations system continue to constitute an important vehicle for advancing international development cooperation, particularly in the developing countries. The enhanced coordination and pooling of resources and services among the specialized funds will not only lead to better planning but will also maximize programme impact and minimize administrative costs.

Indeed, Lesotho has already made its own contribution, however small, towards reaching the ideal of a unified United Nations presence in the field. The Government of Lesotho, using its own national resources, has constructed a United Nations House office complex, which will accommodate all field representatives of the funds and programmes as well as other United Nations agencies in our capital. This House was inaugurated and handed over to the United Nations Resident Coordinator only five days ago, on 25 September 1997.

The suggestion by the Secretary-General for the establishment of a $1 billion revolving fund also has its own merits. Let me, however, hasten to emphasize that there can be no substitute for a demonstrable commitment by all Member States to honour their treaty obligations by paying their assessed contributions on time, fully and unconditionally, in order to ensure the financial health of our Organization. We nevertheless believe that the proposed revolving fund can only be a short-term palliative. But such a fund should serve neither to exculpate those who renege on their treaty obligations nor to place an additional burden on countries that are already making sacrifices to honour their obligations in accordance with the Charter.

As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 1998, the issue of the protection of human rights is assuming an increasing importance to all our countries because of its close linkage with democracy, peace and stability. My Government therefore welcomes the Secretary-General's proposed reforms regarding the strengthening of the Organization's role in the field of human rights. In this connection, we wish to urge that the consolidation of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights into one entity should not lead to the blurring of the distinction between the political functions of the High Commissioner and the purely technical functions of the Centre.

The increasing globalization of organized crime, including trafficking in illicit drugs, continues to be a source of concern to the international community. It is for this reason that in our subregion, the countries of the Southern African Development Community are taking cooperative measures to combat the scourge of transnational organized crime. Lesotho believes that the proposal to establish in Vienna a high-profile United Nations office whose main focus would be on drug control and crime prevention should be given favourable consideration.

With regard to the reform and restructuring of the Security Council, I can only reaffirm the view of the Lesotho Government that only equitable representation on the Security Council and an increase in its membership to no less than 26 can satisfy our aspirations. We share the view held by the majority of members of this body on the need for true democratization of the Security Council and the reform of its working methods, including the issue of the veto power. Such reform should take into account the principle of sovereign equality of States, as well as the need for transparency and accountability in the decision-making processes of the Security Council.

Since the last session of the General Assembly, we have witnessed a number of developments in the international arena that augur well for world political stability and peace. Recently we all shared in the universal joy at the peaceful reunification of Hong Kong with its motherland. The United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China ought to be congratulated for their significant contribution to world peace and for the valuable lesson that they have imparted to the world community in the sphere of resolution of disputes through dialogue.

In our region, we have witnessed the birth of a new Democratic Republic of the Congo from the crucible of one of the most vicious dictatorships ever recorded in the annals of history. It is now for the international community to assist the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in their efforts aimed at economic reconstruction and the consolidation of democracy and accountability in their country. The acceptance of the Democratic Republic of the Congo into the Southern African Development Community at the beginning of this month was a signal of the determination of the countries of southern Africa to make their own positive contribution to the reconstruction efforts of the Congolese people.

We are also greatly encouraged by the recent restoration of stability and democracy in Liberia through the assistance of neighbouring countries in that region.

However, the reversion of Sierra Leone to a state of anarchy and chaos after the selfless efforts made by the international community to bring about stability in that country remains a source of great concern. Lesotho joins in the call by African States for the international community to withhold recognition of the military junta in Sierra Leone and to remain steadfast in its resolve to restore democracy and constitutional legitimacy in that country.

In Angola, the recalcitrance of the UNITA leadership continues to unravel the gains that had been made in the search for peace. The United Nations owes it to the people of Angola to enforce, through the Security Council, appropriate punitive measures against UNITA as a signal that those who stand in the way of peace can no longer be allowed to succeed.

The recent events in the Middle East have cast a shadow on a future that seemed to hold promise for a negotiated peace. False moves have escalated tension in the region rather than abating it. We call upon Israel, as we have always done in the past, to fully implement all Security Council resolutions aimed at the peaceful settlement of the conflict in that region. All the parties to the conflict must recommit themselves to the peace process and refrain from any acts which might jeopardize a negotiated settlement.

The continuous eruption of armed conflicts throughout the world, particularly in the developing countries, is a source of concern to all of us. These conflicts put a tremendous strain on the resources of the United Nations and on the Organization's capacity to maintain international peace and security. Thus, we are encouraged by the positive attitude and the interest that some of the developed countries have in the recent years shown in cooperating with the Organization of African Unity towards enhancing Africa's capacity in the field of conflict prevention. We also welcome Japan's initiative to host an international conference on conflict prevention in Tokyo in January 1998. Taken in their totality, these initiatives underline the moral responsibility that rests on humanity to ensure that peoples everywhere enjoy the right to peace, development and the sanctity of life.

Lesotho is generally encouraged by the progress that is being made in the field of disarmament with the recent signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Despite the current relaxation of tension in international relations, disarmament must continue to be accorded high priority on the agenda of the international community with a view to achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Africa has already contributed positively to the disarmament process by the signing, in Egypt, of the Pelindaba Treaty declaring Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The recent international negotiations in Oslo regarding a ban on anti-personnel mines are also a step in the right direction. Lesotho fully supports the Ottawa process and urges all nations to associate themselves with it so that a truly global treaty banning the production and use of anti-personnel mines can be successfully concluded in December this year.

Last year, the Assembly demonstrated the widespread and growing international support for a permanent international criminal court when it unanimously adopted resolution 51/207, which set mid-1998 as the date for a diplomatic conference to finalize and adopt a convention on the establishment of such a court. We have been encouraged by the progress made during the last two sessions of the Preparatory Committee, held in February and in August.

We appreciate the generous offer by the Italian Government to host the conference. The time has now come for the necessary arrangements for the convening of such a conference to be put in place, and reaffirming the June 1998 date will enable the Italian Government to proceed with the necessary logistical arrangements and ensure that the court is established before the end of the century. Lesotho fully and unreservedly supports that date. We remain convinced that the early establishment of the court will offer the advantage of a system that aims to serve the common global good by preventing local outbreaks of violence from becoming security crises with global repercussions, and to deter the continued recurrence of the genocide and other massive crimes against humanity that have haunted the world since Nuremberg and Tokyo.

Members will recall the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD IX), held two years ago in South Africa, whose main agenda item was on promoting growth and sustainable development in a globalizing and liberalizing economy. In the post-UNCTAD-IX period, a major

challenge before us is to maximize the developmental impact of this globalizing and liberalizing world economy. This can be achieved only by ensuring that the risk of marginalizing and even excluding weaker nations from participating actively in international trade and commerce is avoided at all costs.

When we met during the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, held only four months ago, we all expressed our deep concern that, compared to 1992, the overall trend regarding sustainable development in developing countries is worse today. Poverty and environmental degradation continue to afflict the lives of millions of people in many parts of the world. The staggering statistics only underline the need to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to improve the lot of our disadvantaged peoples. In particular, they reaffirm that United Nations operational activities for development have a critical and unique role to play in enabling the developing countries to continue to lead the management of their own development process, and that the funds and programmes within the United Nations system continue to constitute important vehicles for advancing international development cooperation. It is in this spirit that we would support those efforts that are aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and the capacity of the funds and programmes in the area of development assistance.

In conclusion, allow me to observe that with the vision that the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has brought to the Organization within his short period in office, the United Nations can and will come to terms with the challenges that lie in the years ahead. The rationalization of the structures and working methods of our Organization will surely allow us to achieve our objectives.

The Acting President: The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Kassymjomart Tokaev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Tokaev (Kazakhstan): First of all, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to his high office, which convincingly proves that the international prestige of Ukraine, one of the founders of the United Nations, is widely recognized. For the current session, which is being held in the spirit of renewal of this world forum, it is very symbolic.

I also with to express our appreciation to the previous President, Mr. Razali Ismail, for his considerable contribution to the successful work of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

Kazakhstan believes that in the twenty-first century the United Nations should become a highly effective instrument that will help to make a smooth transition to real multipolarity, establish global economic partnership and democratize international relations. For our part, we stand ready to contribute to the adoption within the United Nations of important decisions on the urgent issues of today.

The Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has undertaken to carry out a daunting mission of reforming the Organization. Nothing could be harder than to live in times of change; it is all the harder to be the maker of the changes. This is why we are fully on the side of the man at the head of the United Nations, and we welcome his initiatives and his course of action. Kazakhstan supports the Secretary-General's proposals regarding a more efficient leadership and management structure, a new management culture and structural transformations within the Organization.

We support measures taken by the United Nations to ensure sustainable development. In our view, the proposed United Nations Development Group deserves endorsement. At the same time, it is important to preserve the independence and the distinctiveness of the funds and programmes that are being consolidated, especially the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a reputable organization that is doing so much for the sake of children, including its work in Kazakhstan.

The financial crisis of the United Nations is an urgent issue demanding a solution. The programme of reforms proposed by the Secretary-General provides for measures to redress the situation in which the Organization has found itself. There is no doubt that the improvement of the financial situation of the United Nations depends on the fulfilment by Member States of their obligations to the Organization. Despite the economic difficulties of the transition period, Kazakhstan is trying to honour its financial obligations. At the same time, we consider it imperative to further improve the scale of assessment on the basis of real ability to pay.

Kazakhstan, as one of the States that have joined the system of stand-by arrangements, supports the strengthening of the Organization's capacity to carry out preventive and peacekeeping activities. We welcome the

Secretary-General's proposals on the issues of disarmament and regulation of armaments, and we support his measures regarding human rights, organized crime, drugs and terrorism.

Kazakhstan is ready to join in efforts to strengthen the role of the General Assembly in dealing with burning international issues. Our country is in favour of convening a special "Millennium Assembly" in the year 2000. This idea is in consonance with President Nursultan Nazarbaev's initiative to convene on the eve of the twenty-first century a special session of the General Assembly devoted to reform.

In our opinion, United Nations reforms should be carried out in an integrated manner, at different levels and in different directions. At the same time, it is impossible to ignore that the key element of these reforms is the reform of the Security Council itself. Kazakhstan has repeatedly declared its support for Germany and Japan as candidates for permanent membership of the Council. Supporting the enlargement of the Council in both categories of its members, we believe it is possible to include as its permanent members representatives of the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America in order to ensure a balance of interests and an adequate reflection of existing geopolitical realities. It is important to keep in mind, however, that to preserve the Security Council's efficiency, the number of its members should be limited. At the same time, we think it is necessary to show proper respect and to pay attention to other proposals coming from other States.

Kazakhstan has on several occasions used this high rostrum to stress the need to strengthen the United Nations activities in the area of the environment. For our country these activities have special importance. For this reason, addressing the nineteenth special session of the United Nations General Assembly last June, the President of Kazakhstan once again drew the attention of the international community to the acute environmental problems inherited by our country. I refer to ecological disaster areas of the Aral Sea and the former Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground.

The problem of the Aral Sea has a global dimension. Particles of salt sediments from this region have been found in Europe, as well as in the Arctic Ocean. The Aral Sea region is witnessing a disastrous shortage of fresh water, a worsening of the population's health and the degradation of the natural environment.

Some 470 nuclear explosions have been conducted at the Semipalatinsk testing ground, which used to be the largest in the world. Enormous damage has been caused to the health of the population and the natural environment. We believe that nuclear weapons represent a tragedy that affects all the peoples of the world. With that in mind, our Head of State has spoken about the responsibility of the nuclear Powers for the damage caused to the population and the natural environment of the States where nuclear tests were conducted. Such responsibility could be shouldered by setting up an international fund for the rehabilitation of the health of the population and the environment of the regions affected by nuclear-weapon tests.

Our President's decision to close the Semipalatinsk testing ground should be considered as a major contribution to nuclear disarmament of historic significance. This month Kazakhstan hosted an international conference on nuclear non-proliferation, initiated by President Nazarbaev. Participants visited the former testing ground and became further convinced of the need to assist Kazakhstan, which is overcoming the consequences of nuclear tests conducted for more than half a century.

In this respect, the strengthening of environmental security has the highest priority for the region of Central Asia. Accordingly, at a meeting held in Almaty last February, the Heads of the Central Asian States adopted a Declaration proclaiming 1998 a Year of Environmental Protection in our region and highlighting the need to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. We are grateful to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his support for the idea of establishing such a zone, in his message addressed to the participants in the Semipalatinsk conference.

As a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Kazakhstan is firmly committed to the non-proliferation regime, and considers it important to actively contribute to its further strengthening. Our State vigorously supports the objectives of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We believe that the signing of this document was one of the most important and historic events of this century, which is nearing its end. We call on all States to adhere to this Treaty.

Recognizing the importance of a deep reduction in the number of conventional weapons having indiscriminate effects, Kazakhstan took a decision to declare a moratorium, effective 6 August 1997, on the

export of anti-personnel mines, including the re-export and transit thereof.

Kazakhstan has taken consistent steps to strengthen security and stability at the regional level. Nursultan Nazarbaev's initiative to convene a Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, first put forward at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, is shaping up on the practical plane. We are planning to convene, in 1998, a meeting of Foreign Ministers of interested States to discuss security issues in Asia.

The formation of a Central Asian battalion under the auspices of the United Nations has become a factor of stability in the Central Asian region and provides clear evidence of the implementation of the proposal made by our Head of State. Recently, its first exercises were successfully conducted in Kazakhstan.

The signing of unique agreements between Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and the People's Republic of China on confidence-building measures and the reduction of armed forces in the border region should be considered as a major achievement in the area of international security.

We note with satisfaction the signing in June of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan, which represents a significant breakthrough in the settlement, under the auspices of the United Nations, of the longest-running conflict among the post-Soviet countries. Kazakhstan is one of the guarantors of the peace process in Tajikistan. We believe that all those concerned should ensure the adoption of practical measures to facilitate the implementation of the agreements concluded, the delivery of international humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction of the national economy.

We are seriously concerned by the continued armed confrontation in Afghanistan. We in Kazakhstan are convinced that peace in that country can be achieved through political negotiations, under the auspices of the United Nations, between all the parties involved in this conflict in order to establish peace and form a Government of national unity in that country, which has suffered so much.

Kazakhstan, which is committed to the ideas of renewal, has firmly embarked on a course of economic reform and the democratization of social life. Reforms in our country have become irreversible. The privatization of the economy is being completed, the level of inflation has been steadily low, the national currency is stable and liquid, and for the first time in a little more than five years of independence we have registered economic growth. Kazakhstan is open to the outside world and offers considerable investment opportunities. Our State is leading the Commonwealth of Independent States in per capita foreign investments. We strongly believe that very soon Kazakhstan will firmly take its place in global integration processes and become a fully fledged member of major economic associations and organizations.

We should like to express our appreciation to the United Nations for its support for President Nazarbaev's proposal to create a joint body for Central Asia under two regional Commissions, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). In a few days' time, the heads of these Commissions will come to our country. A special ECE-ESCAP programme for Central Asian States is under way. A joint office of the two organizations is to be opened in Almaty.

I would like to make special mention of the activities of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). Seven new States, including Kazakhstan, joined ECO not very long ago. Nevertheless, the ECO member States have managed to reach promising levels of cooperation and interaction. The declaration adopted at the ECO summit last May provides an opportunity to create new transportation corridors and routes to transport hydrocarbons, and the ECO member States, as well as many other countries in Asia and Europe, are equally interested in their development.

How the Organization will look when it enters the twenty-first century will depend on the decisions we take in the follow-up to our discussions of United Nations reform. Years ago, an enormous internal capacity was built into the United Nations Charter. The United Nations was designed for a world based on the principles of partnership and cooperation, not on all-out confrontation. Also important is the fact that the United Nations Charter, which might be called an institutional pillar of the Organization, is a highly balanced document, free of any visible bias in one direction or another, and this has allowed it to become, one might say, a code of modern international relations that no civilized State has any right to ignore. The decisions that are being taken should be as balanced as possible and should not amount to stop-gap

and ad hoc measures. That is one of the main demands with regard to United Nations reform.

The United Nations should come out of the reform process renewed, more effective and more efficient.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein, Her Excellency Ms. Andrea Willi.

Ms. Willi (Liechtenstein): On behalf of the Liechtenstein Government, I should like to congratulate the President on his election to preside over the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. I wish also to express my thanks and recognition to the Permanent Representative of Malaysia, Ambassador Razali Ismail, for the dynamic way in which he conducted the work of the fifty-first session. Further, I should like to pay tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan, our new Secretary-General. In the first nine months of his tenure, and at a particularly decisive time for the United Nations, he has shown great leadership qualities. I wish to assure him of our full support and cooperation.

We live in a world that is more interdependent than ever before. Globalization implies that Governments and societies can best meet such global challenges as democracy, the eradication of poverty, the promotion and protection of human rights, sustainable development, humanitarian emergencies and refugee problems if they take action together. International problems require international solutions, and the world community must work together to deal with them on the basis of international law, through a constructive dialogue of the international community as a whole.

This leads me to our Organization, which is a unique — indeed, the only — forum for such cooperation, and to the deep and far-reaching reform proposals which the Secretary-General, after a first reform package submitted in March, presented in his report (A/51/950) of 14 July 1997. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has taken on the challenging task of reform with the necessary combination of energy and circumspection. I wish first of all to state that we welcome the report and will lend our full support to achieving its objectives. I hope that the reform process will lead to concrete results before the end of this year. We share the opinion of those countries that have stressed that reform must not be a cost-cutting exercise but a matter of strengthening the role of the Organization as an active and effective world forum.

We welcome and support the Secretary-General's proposal to establish the post of a Deputy Secretary-General who will have a particular role in ensuring the success of activities and programmes that cross functional sectors and Secretariat units. We particularly support the Secretary-General's suggestion to fill that post with a qualified woman. We also welcome the proposal to replace the Department of Humanitarian Affairs with an Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and we hope that this measure will bring about the necessary changes to ensure a more efficient coordination of United Nations activities in this very important field.

The Secretary-General has also suggested integrating human rights into all the principal activities of the United Nations, and we are fully supportive of this approach because it reflects the comprehensive and cross-cutting nature of human rights. We are gratified to see Mrs. Mary Robinson in her new post as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We wish her success in her challenging tasks and pledge to her our full support. We are confident that her appointment will give additional momentum to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide and that the consolidation of her Office with the Centre for Human Rights will provide her with a solid institutional basis from which to take on her principal responsibility for United Nations human rights activities. That will be possible, however, only if the underfunding of human rights programmes that we have witnessed for so long finally comes to an end. Human rights are the legitimate concern of the international community, and this should be reflected in the appropriation of sufficient funds from the regular budget.

We also continue to be very concerned about the precarious overall financial situation of the Organization, which is obviously linked to the failure of some Member States to fulfil their obligations regarding the prompt and full payment of their assessed financial contributions. It is important to note that the best reform efforts will be seriously hampered unless the Organization's finances are put in order.

Since we last met in New York for the general debate at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, major — indeed, crucial — efforts have been undertaken to eliminate anti-personnel landmines. This matter has become a truly global cause, promoted by individuals and non-governmental organizations worldwide and propelled by Governments, which have committed themselves to the Ottawa process to achieve a global ban on landmines. This is of exemplary value. Liechtenstein remains

committed to the elimination of anti-personnel landmines, and we therefore wholeheartedly support the results of the negotiations that were concluded recently at Oslo. We are particularly pleased that it was possible to agree on a final text which is simple, with no exceptions, no reservations and no loopholes. We are of the opinion that only such a treaty can bring us closer to the goal of the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have made outstanding efforts in the course of the Ottawa process, particularly the Governments of Canada, Austria, Belgium and Norway, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross.

While the adoption of the treaty will constitute a milestone in the history of both disarmament and international humanitarian law, further steps will be needed, and the participation of as many States as possible in the meeting which will bring the process back to Ottawa in December will be a crucial element in those efforts. Liechtenstein plans to sign the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and is committed to its ratification at the earliest possible date.

The establishment of an international criminal court is another area in which we have been able to make significant progress over the past year, and we are approaching the date of the diplomatic conference at which the statute of the court will be adopted. We wholeheartedly support the establishment of the international criminal court, which will constitute a milestone in the history of international law, and we continue to believe that that court has to be strong and independent if it is to make an effective contribution to the protection of human rights and the observance of international humanitarian law. It is of crucial importance that the General Assembly agree at this session on the precise dates for the diplomatic conference and that that decision allow for the fullest possible participation by small States, which have a particular interest in this matter.

Two years ago, we adopted the Declaration and Platform of Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Initiatives and actions have been taken towards the implementation of these commitments. The Liechtenstein Government has since taken a number of appropriate measures, while a comprehensive package containing detailed further action is presently being prepared.

The role of women in preventive diplomacy and in peacekeeping and the persistent absence of women from peace negotiations are of particular concern to my delegation. The more active participation of women in conflict resolution should be promoted, since women bring different perspectives and innovative approaches to preventive diplomacy as well as to peacekeeping. The equal access and full participation of women in decision-making at all levels and in power structures, including challenging assignments, such as serving as special representatives of the Secretary-General, are also important in the area of the promotion and maintenance of peace and security.

Special attention should be given to the situation of women in armed conflicts, including refugee women. Women are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and human rights violations, both before they flee and as refugees. In the Beijing Platform of Action, the need to provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women and displaced women is clearly recognized.

Liechtenstein first introduced in 1991 an initiative on the right of self-determination, the ultimate goal of which is to enable States facing internal problems — be they between the central Government and communities or between communities within States — to cope with these problems in a peaceful and flexible manner on the basis of international law and through constructive dialogue. Ever since, we have consolidated and further developed our ideas, and we would like to thank all those who have given us active support in this endeavour.

At the end of October, the Liechtenstein Research Program in Self-Determination at the Woodrow Wilson School of Princeton University will continue its series of conferences devoted to issues of self-government and self-administration. I would like to renew to all here our invitation to attend the next conference, which will take place from 31 October to 1 November. We hope that this conference will provide a deeper understanding of the complex issues underlying the concept of self-determination, which has played such an outstanding role in the history of our Organization. We hope that this initiative can be a positive contribution to the future work of the United Nations.

The capacity of the United Nations to deal with the challenges of the future, however, will depend on our decisions on the reform of the Organization, decisions which we have to take now. Today, I wish to renew Liechtenstein's commitment to the principles and

purposes of the United Nations. We are willing to contribute to the extent possible so that this chance to renew the United Nations will not pass us by.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chairman of the Delegation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, His Excellency Mr. Abuzed Omar Dorda.

Mr. Dorda (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me, at the outset, to express to Mr. Udovenko, on behalf of my country's delegation, our warm congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. His election to that high post is a tribute of the international community to his friendly country and a reflection of the confidence of the Members of the United Nations in his ability to shoulder this heavy responsibility.

By the same token, we express our great appreciation to his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, for the great efficiency with which he conducted the affairs and deliberations of the Assembly at its previous session. Furthermore, I wish on this occasion to express my country's gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the unrelenting efforts he has made since his assumption of his post to enhance the role, efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations.

Some people have thought that the end of the so-called cold war would be conducive to the creation of favourable conditions for equitable and healthy international relations based on mutual respect and fruitful and constructive cooperation among human communities. However, what the Secretary-General has rightly described as a period of "frenzy" has not taken long to lay such assumptions to rest and wreak havoc in several regions of the world. This frenzy is the product of the new unipolar system in which one country sits alone on the top. This singularity has emboldened that country to continue to spread its hegemony, expand the area and scope of its aggression and impose its conditions, concerned only with its own interests and ignoring those of others. It has even fought against the interests of its own allies. Those who have exposed these trends and refused to pay homage and obeisance except to God have been labelled outlaws.

The end of the so-called cold war deprived the world of that balance of power which had, in the past, provided a protective umbrella for all small, poor and weak countries. It has even protected other countries as well. The most important need on the international scene today is to work seriously to establish any kind of international balance to preserve the little that has remained of States' independence, freedom of thought and action, and then to reverse the negative effects of the period of frenzy, which is still with us, although it has somewhat receded.

The United Nations has been manipulated by the only super-Power, which sits alone at the top, against certain peoples, States and even regions that have joined this Organization in search of protection, security, peace and cooperation. The United States of America has managed to push the Security Council into adopting resolutions outside its competence against whoever has said "no" to unilateral hegemony and tyranny or defended the independence of their countries and their ability to take free decisions and have free choices. These resolutions adopted at the height of the period of frenzy at the beginning of this decade were falsely described as being consistent with international legality, while in reality there was nothing legal or international about them. They were adopted through *diktat* and by the use of threats directed at the capitals of the States concerned in order to ensure their continued applicability.

Paragraphs 102 and 103 of the report of the Secretary-General on the reform process (A/51/950) clearly and unequivocally show that these resolutions not only lack international legality but also that they should be reviewed and rescinded.

Globalization which means only the imposition of the interests, language, culture, values and customs of the one and only Power at the top is not globalization. It is merely a crowning of that Power as head of the entire world. Proof of this can be found in the great contradiction between words and deeds. Its leaders call for the liberalization of international trade, then enact legislation imposing one embargo after another on the movement of goods and capital against those countries and peoples that want to remain independent and free in their decision-making. They punish, through their own legislation, whoever in the world cooperates with it.

What was published today in *The New York Times* regarding cooperation between a company located in a State which is an ally of the United States, and Iran is the clearest evidence of the truth of what we are stating.

They are the ones who dictate economic embargo resolutions against countries and peoples and then unilaterally follow up their implementation. Moreover, it is these same quarters that work to disarm countries and selectively destroy whatever weapons they have, while

allowing only themselves and their allies, to the exclusion of everyone else, to manufacture, possess and acquire armaments. The same quarters provide money, men, technology, and know-how to a select group of countries in order that they may establish and develop a military industry capable of producing all types of conventional weapons and even weapons of mass destruction, and if necessary would send their armies and fleets to fight at their sides.

They call for the protection of human rights while refusing to acknowledge human rights for anybody but their own people. This is the case in the denial of the right of the two Libyan citizens to a fair and neutral trial.

It is the same country that calls for the combating of terrorism and then goes on to label self-defence, the defence of honour and resistance against foreign occupiers, as terrorism. They call for democracy and then support and finance those who oppose democracy, especially if those who come to power are against the influence in their country of the only super-Power.

These examples of the contradiction between words and deeds, between propaganda and the executive policies and legislative positions of the very same Power, clearly show that the call for globalization is not intended for the good of the world. In reality the world reaps nothing but a name.

The African continent, which is considered the most underdeveloped part of the world as we stand at the end of the twentieth century, is not, in fact, responsible for its backwardness. A brief review of Africa's history and a discerning look at its present state of affairs readily show that all the problems, without exception, Africa faces — whether they be problems of political instability in some of its regions or economic underdevelopment in most, if not all, its countries — are caused by those who colonized and drew the political borders of the African countries.

Not one single African country has drawn its own borders with its neighbours. It was the colonial countries which did that, dividing tribes, clans and communities among different countries and thus sowing the seeds of the current social tensions in many parts of the continent at an early time. This was a deliberate act carried out under the infamous policy of "divide and rule".

Not only did they draw the borders, but they also looted the natural resources, which they now monopolize. Any country that dares to free its resources is quickly surrounded by embargoes. They use all the financial and economic institutions, including the so-called international institutions, in a manner that deprives these countries of any choice but to surrender to their conditions or face the consequences of confronting them. The responsibility for what happened during the past epoch and for what continues to occur in our African continent should be shouldered by those who caused it in the first place.

The slogan "Africa should help itself", though seemingly innocent, is misleading, because it involves an attempt at avoiding the responsibility for the consequences of the acts of those who sowed the seeds of all this in the not-so-distant past. This is still fresh in the memory of current generations. Those who do care for Africa do not impose conditions for assisting Africa. Africa is ready to cooperate with those who are willing to help, but cannot accept dealing with those who dictate to it.

My country would like to endorse the position outlined here in the General Assembly and at the Security Council meeting devoted to Africa by President Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). This is the position of all Africa and all Africans. From this rostrum, my country salutes President Mugabe. We confirm what he said: Africa does not ask for charity from anybody.

We urge those who seek permanent membership in the Security Council to remember Africa all the time, and not only when they need the votes of its countries in the General Assembly to help them take over posts and seats in various councils and committees. We urge them, and others, to review the standards and criteria for their relations with the African countries before it is too late.

Allow me to recall what one of Africa's leaders said 15 years ago. His country used to export one ton of cocoa in order to import one tractor. Now it has to export 12 tons of cocoa in order to import one tractor. This astronomical increase in the price of manufactured goods compared with the price of raw materials in the space of 15 years is a sufficient reply to all the questions raised about the relationships of others with Africa in various fields. This very example explains some of the causes of the suffering in several African countries, at various levels.

We would like to say here to both old and new colonialists alike: Hands off Africa, then Africa will know how to help itself.

The truth of what we have been saying all along concerning the Palestinian question has been proved to everybody. Everyone here has seen and heard about the practices of the Israeli occupation authorities in Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories, from the Golan to southern Lebanon, or rather, all of Lebanon. The Security Council held meetings to consider the situation in these territories, but those meetings were aborted by the American veto. The General Assembly held a special session on the matter, and what was the result? Nothing. This would explain what the region is facing these days, and what is in gestation now is even more dangerous than what is being witnessed today.

The Iraqi people are not only starving and dying; they are suffering from something more serious than hunger and more dangerous than death. It is known that some Iraqi individuals have been forced to sell body parts, such as kidneys, to feed their children for a little while. What kind of international legality can justify the continued application of sanctions that lead to such results? How can any claims be accepted now from those who pay lip service to so-called human rights, yet do not apply them except to serve their political ends? How is it then possible to allow the partition of Iraq and the violation of the inviolability of its borders and its territory by foreigners and their armed forces? It is the United Nations which is responsible for this situation, since it created the conditions that led to this situation and has provided the cover for what is happening in Iraq. It is now the United Nations responsibility to redress this situation to which it has given rise.

My country overlooks the Mediterranean, with a coast that extends for about 2,000 kilometres. That is why we are very keen on making the Mediterranean a lake of peace and cooperation for its coastal States. However, this is made impossible by the presence of foreign military bases and foreign fleets that undermine the region's stability and represent a permanent source of danger. This presence has been the cause of our continued concern, because we have sacrificed half our population for our freedom. Three times a year, we celebrate the anniversaries of the evacuation of foreign troops from our country. Peace, stability and cooperation in the Mediterranean will be possible only when foreign military bases are eliminated, when foreign fleets are withdrawn from its waters.

My country, like the rest of the developing world, welcomes the international conventions aimed at the prohibition and elimination of weapons of mass destruction. We believe that this is in the interest of mankind as a whole. However, the resumption of nuclear tests, under any pretext, is a great source of disappointment because they are a violation of the international conventions concluded in this field. The possession by Tel Aviv of nuclear weapons has placed the entire eastern Arab region under a direct threat, constant dangers and definite instability.

Without technical and financial support, without the experts and scientists who are part and parcel of this support, such weapons would not have been produced in the region. It is well known — indeed, it has been declared — that tests are now being conducted on long-range missiles that could deliver these weapons of mass destruction to their targets in Arab and Muslim lands alike. Tests are also being conducted on anti-missile missiles, as part of the strategic cooperation between Washington and Tel Aviv.

On the other hand, all Iraqi weapons have been destroyed. Preparations are being made to destroy all the weapons of the Arabs and Muslims, who are helpless and whose territories are occupied. Alliances are being forged to surround the Arabs and Muslims so as to prevent them from ever becoming powerful and so as to secure for Washington their oil, their gas and their markets.

This is the truth, however bitter it may be for us Arabs and Muslims to swallow. My country would like to alert the world to the real sources of danger, not the fictitious ones — that is, those being used to fabricate causes and pretexts to justify the destruction and recolonization of the rest of the world.

It is not Libya, nor Syria, nor Iraq, nor Iran nor the Sudan which constitute any danger, by any measure, to the security of the region or the security and peace of the world. The real danger to international peace and security lies in Washington and Tel Aviv, and those who emulate them. They both possess and manufacture weapons of mass destruction. Washington manufactures them and Washington exports them. This is while the countries to which I have referred do not manufacture weapons and, moreover, have been prevented by America from importing any such weapons. America has imposed an international arms embargo against those countries. It has destroyed Iraqi weapons, and is now preparing to destroy

the conventional and even the obsolete weapons possessed by others.

This is the law of the United States against which these countries have rebelled. Thus they were labelled "rogues". This is the new and old form of discrimination. This is the newest form of anti-Semitism.

We call for emptying the region of the Arab East of weapons of mass destruction, which Tel Aviv owns. The plants that manufacture these weapons should be subjected to international safeguards and controls. We also call for investigating the financial and technical support that enabled Tel Aviv to produce these weapons. We must criminalize this support and those who provide it. The agreements of military strategic cooperation between Washington and Tel Aviv are hostile instruments, targeting the region as a whole and its peoples. This provides evidence of the real intentions of the United States towards the region and its peoples, voids its allegations and argumentations with respect to disarmament and reveals its intentions.

We highlight these issues to show the world the extent of the injustice to which we have been subjected and to what extent the United States of America is deceiving everybody.

The United States used to have five military bases in my country. It had monopolized the production and export of Libyan oil and gas. The United Kingdom also had a number of military bases in Libya. Through its own company, British Petroleum, it also produced and exported our oil.

With the advent of the revolution of 1 September 1969, Libya immediately evacuated the military bases of those two countries and later liberated its oil wealth from their companies.

However, under international conditions that the Secretary-General has rightly called a period of frenzy, the two countries thought that the time was ripe for a return to what they were forced to relinquish and to regain control of the 2,000-kilometre-long Libyan coastline, adjacent to the three old continents of Africa, Asia and Europe. They believed the time was ripe to regain control of my country's oil, gas and market, as well as neighbouring markets. Once finished with the Gulf War, they turned their attention to Libya. However, the two countries were unable to find a pretext to realize their ambition of a new return to Libya except by resorting to allegations, which came to be known later as the Lockerbie case.

What is the real truth about Lockerbie? In brief, and precisely, it is as follows. First, both the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain are aware, more than anybody else, that Libya has nothing whatever to do with this aeroplane and the tragic incident that killed its passengers and crew.

Second, both the United States of America and the United Kingdom claim that two Libyans placed a time bomb in a bag on board a Maltese Airlines flight that took off from Malta, and that the bag was unaccompanied baggage. They claim that this very bag, which was not accompanied by a passenger, was transferred in Frankfurt airport from the Maltese Airlines aeroplane to an American aeroplane destined for London. Once again, they say, this same bag was transferred in London airport from the aircraft originating in Frankfurt to Pan Am Flight 103, which later took off from London and exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland.

Can the Assembly imagine how an unaccompanied bag can move by itself from one airplane to another and from one airport to another with such accuracy?

Third, the Government of Malta investigated the matter and found that there were no unaccompanied bags on the flight in question. Malta announced the results of the investigation at the time.

Fourth, the competent authorities in Germany, in turn, investigated the question and found nothing to corroborate the story about the bag.

Fifth, in any case, my country, despite the known objectives of the authors of the accusation, dealt seriously and pragmatically with the accusation. We informed all concerned parties that we had begun implementation of the provisions of the 1971 Montreal Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation. The legal authorities in Libya began exercising their legal jurisdiction in accordance with that Convention.

Sixth, my country asked the two countries concerned to hand over to Libyan judicial authorities the results of their investigations so they could be used in our investigation. This request was rejected.

Seventh, my country then asked the two countries to send investigators to Libya to participate in the investigation. Once again they refused.

Eighth, my country then offered to send its judicial officials to meet with the competent authorities in both the United States and the United Kingdom to peruse the file on this question. This offer was turned down.

Ninth, Libya also offered to let a neutral party or parties to carry out the investigation. The two countries refused that offer.

Tenth, once again, my country proposed that the United Nations should carry out the investigation. That proposal was rejected.

Eleventh, in a letter addressed to the Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom and the United States Secretary of State by the Secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation, my country requested that article 14 of the 1971 Montreal Convention be invoked. That request was refused.

Twelfth, Libya proposed resorting to the International Court of Justice to decide the case. That proposal was turned down by the other parties. And when my country unilaterally took the case to the International Court of Justice, the parties concerned quickly turned the whole issue from a legal to a political one, submitting it to the Security Council to prevent the International Court of Justice from deciding the case. Here we have the Security Council dealing with an issue pertaining to two citizens of a country. The issue is now five years old. So the issue is before the Security Council precisely to prevent the International Court of Justice from deciding the case since the matter was put before the Security Council, despite the fact that Libya, naturally, had resorted to the International Court of Justice before the matter was even referred to the Security Council.

This is how this legal question was politicized. When did that occur? This was done at the peak of the "frenzy" period, on 21 January 1992. Nobody at the time could say no to the United States of America. As we all know, the Security Council, under well-known and frankly recognized pressures, adopted resolution 731 (1992) which did not stipulate any surrender of the suspects, but requested a response to the demands of the countries concerned. I repeat, it did not provide for surrendering the suspects.

Thirteenth, my country has fully responded to the provisions of the resolution both in terms and content by cooperating with the United Kingdom on the question of the Irish Republican Army, and with the French investigating judge in all the demands he made. Furthermore, we agreed to a trial for the two Libyan suspects in a fair and neutral court.

Fourteenth, the aim of both the United States and the United Kingdom has not been to discover the real culprit in this regrettable and tragic airplane incident. They already know who the responsible party is. Their real objective has been to use the whole issue, including the human blood that was shed, to achieve their own political objectives which I have already elucidated. To achieve that end, they exploited the Security Council once again, pushing it to adopt resolution 748 (1992) which imposes a near total embargo on Libya and its dealings with the rest of the world. The Council also adopted resolution 883 (1993), which complemented the previous resolution.

Fifteenth, in the face of all this intransigence and arrogance, when all efforts and mediation failed to convince the two countries concerned to opt for dialogue and negotiations; since they had earlier unilaterally severed their diplomatic relations with my country; and because my country has no extradition treaty with either of the two countries, we resorted to regional and international organizations. Today, we would like to put on record, as always, our deepest appreciation to these organizations for their support and for their stand in favour of what is right. Those organizations, let us recall, represent more than two thirds of the international community.

We hasten to confirm that the other third is not against us; rather, its States are simply not members of those organizations. The League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement have all supported my country and expressed their appreciation for my country's flexibility in our handling of the issue, as well as for the positive initiatives we have proposed.

Sixteenth, the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity, through the Harare summit, under the chairmanship of President Robert Mugabe, have proposed that the trial of the two suspects be held in a neutral third country to be determined by the Security Council; that the two suspects be tried by Scottish judges, under Scottish law, at the seat of the

International Court of Justice in The Hague; or that a special criminal tribunal be established to try the two suspects at the seat of the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Seventeenth, both the Secretary-General of the Arab League and the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity came to United Nations Headquarters with the resolutions of their respective organizations in hand, resolutions that are supported by the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement. They submitted these resolutions to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to the President of the Security Council and its member States. What was the reaction of the United States and the United Kingdom? Both rejected the requests made by other members of the Council and used the Council's work mechanism — so-called consensus — to reject all proposals submitted by their majesties and excellencies, the kings and presidents of the two organizations. Naturally, this was a shock to both regional organizations because they were fully and arrogantly ignored.

Eighteenth, on 25 September of this year, during the Security Council's ministerial meeting on Africa, the entire meeting became a forum for discussing the issue when it was raised by His Excellency President Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), in his address to the Council. Again, in the name of my country, its leader and people, I wish to express again our gratitude to President Mugabe for his honourable defence of the concerns and the causes of Africa as a whole, and in particular his defence of my country on this question.

The issue was also raised by His Excellency Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary-General of OAU, and by most of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Council's members. As we express our gratitude to all of them, we wish to confirm that their support would have never been so forthcoming had we been wrong.

Nineteenth, about a week ago, the Council of the League of Arab States decided to call on Arab States to mitigate some of the impacts of the sanctions imposed on my country. We are grateful to the Council and to all our brothers. We realize that this is a step in the right direction and that it is but a mild reaction to their being ignored last July.

We ask you for justice. Members of the Security Council are not against my country. They have expressed that in all our meetings with them. They further add that our problem is with the United States and the United Kingdom. Our dispute is with the judge. How can anyone expect the Security Council to solve the problem when our adversaries are both permanent members of the Council and possess the veto power?

Once again, our problem is with the United States and the United Kingdom. We have no problem whatever with the Security Council, and the Security Council has no problem with us. Had these two countries accepted the proposals of the regional and international organizations, had they showed respect for the States members of these organizations and for their presidents and representatives, the Security Council would not have hesitated for one moment to accept them. This is what we were told by members of the Council. We are not just saying that.

My country calls on all of you to intervene so we can reach a peaceful solution to this dispute, one that would accelerate the holding of the trial for the two suspects before a fair and just court, in an atmosphere free from prior condemnation, in any place agreed upon, or decided upon by the Security Council.

The two suspects were advised by their American and Scottish lawyers against accepting a trial before any court in Scotland or the United States. This is because of intensive media coverage and statements by officials in the two countries which have created a climate and public opinion that have convicted them in advance of any trial. This does not accord with their human right to receive a just and fair trial. The fact that the United States Government has accorded Timothy McVeigh, accused in the Oklahoma explosion, the right to change the venue of his trial from Oklahoma, where the crime occurred, to another state — namely Colorado — is evidence of respect for one of the human rights — a respect which should not be restricted only to the citizens of the United States. This is because human rights should be enjoyed by all human beings, irrespective of their nationality. Human rights should not be accorded to some and denied to others.

My country, at all levels of official responsibility, has repeatedly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We have disassociated ourselves from all suspected terrorist practices. We have also repeatedly asked the Secretary-General and the Security Council to send a committee or envoys to ascertain on the ground the validity of our claims.

However, the refusal and objections of the United States prevented the Secretariat and the Security Council from responding to our requests. This is one of the main reasons why we have such strong suspicions about the true intentions of the United States against my country. This has also exposed its political objectives, for the attainment of which it did not hesitate to exploit human blood.

We call on the international community, as represented in this Assembly, to work towards reaching a solution as soon as possible.

The United States refusal to allow this side issue — "the question of terrorism" — to be closed is aimed at serving the particular objectives of that country, objectives we have already referred to. Everybody knows that it was the United States which more than once committed terrorist acts against my country, using its fleets and its bombers. The most heinous of these acts was the barbaric raid on the night of 15 April 1986 against the residence and office of the Libyan brother leader, and against other residential neighbourhoods in both Tripoli and Benghazi. In this raid, tens of children, women and elderly were martyred in their sleep. The United States cannot produce one shred of evidence to prove the so-called Libyan terrorism, whereas Libya has dozens of proofs of the terrorism perpetrated by the United States against Libya.

The raid made on the night of 15 April 1986 is not a suspected perpetration of an act, as is the case with our citizens who are suspected by the United States. The raid of 15 April 1986 is an established fact whose consequences can still be seen in the tombs of the martyrs in the famous El-Hani Cemetery and in the remnants of buildings that still clearly show the marks of bombs and rockets. And if all of this is far away in Tripoli and Benghazi, I am here before you and I personally stand as a proof of the terrorism of the United States. These scars here on my face and on my head, and on other parts of my body covered by my clothes, are the result of a bomb that an American aircraft dropped on my house, which was totally demolished that night. My young son, who was less than 10 years old at the time, was also injured.

We, who personally were victims of the American raid, resorted to the American judicial system here in the United States and brought a legal suit before an American court. Despite all the evidence, the American judicial system rejected our case. This negative experience with American justice would surely discourage anyone from accepting to be tried by such a judiciary, especially if the opposing party was the American Government. I personally tried to institute a lawsuit and had American lawyers. My house is destroyed and erased from the Tripoli map. I have scars on my face, yet the case was rejected. And now we are to trust it and send our citizens before it? How?

We cannot forget that crime. We will always call for those who decided, planned and implemented it to appear before competent Libyan courts for trial. The crime took place in my country. They say that a crime took place in Scotland? Fine. But another crime took place in Tripoli and Banghazi. Are their people citizens, and our people are not citizens? We are also citizens of our own nation-State. They have mere suspicions. We have facts not suspicions which were actually shown on American television screens.

We believe that the reform of the United Nations is of the utmost importance to us. However, optimum results of this reform cannot be achieved unless the financial situation of the Organization is put on the right track and, most importantly, Member States must pay their assessed contributions. The fact that the United States has reneged on its contractual commitments to the United Nations by not paying its assessed contribution to the budget is the cause of the financial crisis from which the Organization has suffered for years. If the United Nations is to be reformed, that State must pay all of its arrears without conditions and promise to pay in future, on time and without pressures that aim to make the United Nations a hostage of the will and policies of that country.

We know that that State is now pressuring members of the General Assembly to make up for the lowering of its contribution by 5 per cent. We know that nothing has been decided yet regarding changes of assessment or contributions. This is what we call sitting on top of this unipolar world. This is what we are warning the world of. We would not have known that had we not been told by those who are being pressured to pay the extra 5 per cent. The fact that they told us — the Libyans — clearly shows that they are dissatisfied and that they obviously are refusing. They cannot say no. But we can say no.

Within the framework of the reform process, it is essential to have a complete review of the situation of the Security Council. By virtue of our experience with the Security Council — an experience I have just commented on — we know and appreciate the importance and necessity of reforming the Security Council and expanding its membership. We believe that the reform

should focus first on improving the methods of work of the Council — its mechanisms — thus making it impossible for any one country to hamper the work of the Council or make it irrelevant.

My country, which a quarter of a century ago called for the abrogation of the veto power, would like to emphasize now that any reform of the Security Council that does not rescind the veto power would be meaningless. There is no longer any historical or objective reason for maintaining this power. It is not justifiable by any standard of righteousness, justice and equality, and even under the standards of democracy, to which certain countries pay lip service. At the same time, we believe that the reform process will not be useful if it does not take into consideration the interests of all countries and peoples.

That is why my country will support any initiative that would do away with the present imbalance in the membership of the Security Council. In this respect, we should like to underline the need to adhere to the proposals of the Non-Aligned Movement, which are based on full, sovereign equality among States; seek to apply the principle of equitable geographical distribution; and respond to the demands of the developing countries, which represent the majority of the Members of the United Nations.

The General Assembly is the United Nations organ that truly embodies the universal and democratic character of this international Organization. Since it is the only intergovernmental body with a mandate to discuss any question or matter under the Charter, including the maintenance of international peace and security, Libya would like to underline the wide-ranging and repeated calls for the need to invigorate the General Assembly and enhance its powers so as to increase its effectiveness in confronting the ever-changing challenges that face the international community.

Lastly, I wish to apologize for having taken up so much of the Assembly's time.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.